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Jessica Weinberg
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July 11, 2001

Dr. Jane R. Summerson, EIS Document Manager
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 30307, M/S 010
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

Dear Dr. Summerson:

1 I am writing to urge the U.S. Department of Energy to withdraw its support for a proposal to store nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain. Scientific research from a number of environmentally concerned sources, including the consumer advocacy group Public Citizen, shows that Yucca Mountain, for a variety of reasons, a poor location for nuclear waste.

2 First of all, the nuclear waste will almost surely leak into the environment over time, which means that the storage site will not be as "permanent" as it is meant to be. Leakage of nuclear waste is likely to threaten the health of the residents of the Amargosa Valley. The aquifer beneath the mountain, which provides them with drinking water, will almost surely be contaminated, as will the groundwater, which means that local people will be consuming meat, milk and produce that have been produced with contaminated water. Because dairy farms in the same region produce milk that is sold in the Los Angeles area, the negative consequences of nuclear waste on Yucca Mountain have the potential to be very far-reaching.

3 This issue is one of national importance because in order for nuclear waste to be stored on Yucca, it must travel through 43 states, including Ohio, and therefore endanger the health and safety of thousands of Americans who live nowhere near the actual site. According to a Department of Energy estimate, over one thousand "incidents" are likely to occur if the waste is shipped by truck, as well as 70 to 310 accidents. If trains are used, between 50 and 260 accidents as well as 250 incidents could occur. A severe accident could contaminate as much as 42 square miles for over a year, and many communities to do not have the personnel and equipment to deal with such a scenario. Even when shipping is successful and accident-free, however, residents of all areas along the routes will be exposed to radiation, and property values will decline. Because the DOE refuses to disclose the exact transportation routes, citizens cannot figure out whether these risks apply to them or not.

4 Before any place in the United States is declared a safe and appropriate location for the storage
of nuclear waste, more research is needed. The Department of Energy should study locations
5 besides Yucca Mountain that may be more suitable; your refusal to do so has led to allegations of
collusion with the nuclear industry and an investigation by the Inspector General. Until a safer
6 method of transport is discovered or developed, it would be safer to continue to store nuclear
waste at the locations at which it is generated.

6 I have enclosed Public Citizen's recent press release, in which the organization criticizes your
Department's handling of the Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This is
just the latest in a long list of complaints by various environmental groups about the DOE's
effort to get Yucca approved as a storage site.

7 Earlier this year, I voiced the above concerns in a letter addressed to Secretary Abraham at the
DOE's Washington DC address. I did not receive a written response then, nor have I at any time
received any kind of response to my concerns about Yucca from the DOE. I hope to receive
from you a written response that addresses each of the concerns I have voiced, and strongly urge
you and all concerned DOE officials to reconsider your support for this project. Please look out
for all Americans, not just those employed by or concerned with the nuclear industry.

Sincerely,



Jessica Weinberg

P.S. Please share the above concerns with the Secretary of Energy and other Yucca decision-makers.

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From: "Lara Blevins" <lblevins@citizen.org>
Sent: Friday, July 06, 2001 12:28 PM
Subject: Public Citizen Press Release

Press Release, July 5, 2001

Contact: Lisa Gue (202) 454-5130

DOE Should Unify and Extend Deadlines for Comment on Proposed Nuclear Dump Document

Dual Deadlines for Comment Period on Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement Are Confusing and Inequitable

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Public Citizen has requested that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) unify and extend the deadlines for public comment on the Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. The current situation is confusing and inequitable, and further discredits the DOE's process for evaluating the Yucca Mountain repository proposal.

On May 11, the DOE initiated a 45-day comment period on the supplement, which addresses changes in the repository design proposal. Many concerned citizens and public interest organizations, including Public Citizen, expressed concern over this very short comment period, given the highly technical nature of the document. In response, the DOE extended the comment period by 11 days to July 6.

Meanwhile, in recent weeks, the DOE realized that 700 addresses had been erroneously omitted from its mailing list when the supplement was distributed in early May. In what Public Citizen views as an ill-conceived effort to compensate for this blunder, the DOE has now extended the deadline for these parties only until August 13. The first token 11-day extension failed to address real concerns for meaningful public participation, and the DOE's decision to selectively offer an additional extension only compounds this problem.

"This situation is not only confusing, but also inequitable," said Wenonah Hauter, director of Public Citizen's Critical Mass Energy and Environment Program, in a letter to Lake Barrett, acting director of the DOE's Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management. "We urge you to unify the new deadlines for public comment by further extending the general comment period until at least August 13." (A copy of the letter is available at <http://www.citizen.org/cmep/RAGE/radwaste/ltrextension.htm>.)

Other concerned members of the public who are not on any of DOE's mailing lists and have only recently accessed the document have not been afforded any extension. Also, since it is likely that some of the people originally omitted from the DOE's mailing list found other ways to acquire the document before it was mailed to them on June 25, the selective extension arbitrarily grants these individuals the benefit of a longer comment period, while denying the same to other interested stakeholders.

"Given the national significance of the Yucca Mountain Project, public participation must be taken seriously and processes must be conducted with integrity," Hauter's letter said. "Unless corrected, the

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unacceptably short comment period and incongruous deadlines will further erode public confidence in the Department of Energy's Yucca Mountain Project activities."

Yucca Mountain is the government's proposed storage site for high-level nuclear waste produced by commercial nuclear power plants and at nuclear weapons facilities. Located about 80 miles from Las Vegas, Yucca Mountain is currently the only site the DOE is considering. However, concerns exist that the storage casks will leak, radioactively contaminating the surrounding environment and endangering public health. The Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

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Public Citizen is a nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit www.citizen.org.